# ADJOURNMENT MOTION.

**Mr. V. S. Arumukhom Pillai:** Sir, I beg to move for an adjournment of the business of the Council for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the distress caused among the ryots of Nanjinad by the realisation of tax and water cess in respect of lands left fallow for the Kanni crop of 1114 owing to continued drought. A vast area of nearly 8,000 acres in the taluks of Tovala and Agastiswaram have been left fallow for the Kanni crop of 1114 owing to the absence of water as a result of the continued drought. Applications for remission of land tax and water cess were filed by the ryots concerned. Nothing was heard of for some time and now when the time has come for the collection of tax the Proverthicars are very busy in collecting tax in respect of lands that have been left fallow. This has given rise to serious hardships among the ryots concerned and my object in tabling this motion is to bring to the notice of the Government the distress caused among the ryots of Nanjinad by the realization of tax and water cess for the fallow lands and to draw the kind attention of the Government to the extreme necessity of granting remission of land tax and water tax in respect of the fallow lands. Sir, to understand and appraise the true extent of the miseries and hardships among the ryots, mention has to be made of the general position and the peculiarly hard condition of the Nanjinad ryots in general. It is a fact well-known to the present Government that taxation in Nanjinad is the heaviest. As I have so often submitted before this House, the maximum tax per acre in Nanjinad—one will be shocked to hear is Rs. 35 a tax, Sir, the like of which is not obtaining anywhere in this civilized world. The average tax per acre of wet land is Rs. 20 for Agastisvaram and Rs. 15 and odd for Tovala. The average tax obtaining in the Presidency of Madras is Rs. 6 annas 6 and in the neighbouring district of Tinnevelly which is said to bear the heaviest assessment in the Madras Presidency the average is Rs. 9 annas 15. It is not even this heavy and excessive assessment that is most painful but the extreme inequality of taxation. No part of the State bears so much of tax as Nanjinad. It is this inequality in the assessment that is most heart-rending. The principle of taxation in Nanjinad is against all canons, and principles of taxation. It is beyond the capacity of the people to pay. It is not a portion of the produce. It is the entire produce that is being taken away in the name of taxation. When dealing with the question of taxation, I may submit that the most important aspect for consideration is the inequality of taxation in Nanjinad. I have alluded to this very often in this House. Nearly one-fifth of the tax obtaining at present in

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

[Mr. V. S. Arumukham Pillai.]

Nanjinad is based on a wrong calculation committed in the adjustment of the para and kotta measurements for purposes of commutation of tax in kind into money. This question was being agitated for a very long time and it is a great consolation that the Government have now at last realised the real suffering of the people and taken up the question seriously. I understand that the Government in its infinite mercy has deputed an able officer to go into the question and submit a report. I also learn that a report has been submitted. We in Nanjinad confidently hope that from the sympathy and mercy evinced towards us by the present Government this question will be solved most favourably. In the matter of taxation I have to submit one more point for consideration. I have been agitating for a re-settlement. As I have so often pointed out the most glaring defects is the inequality in taxation. This inequality cannot be removed unless by a thorough overhauling of the present system of taxation by a re-settlement and by a complete reorganisation with a view to secure a fair and equitable distribution or tax burdens. Sir, I have been submitting that it is a result of the heavy and excessive nature of the taxation in Nanjinad that the ryots for a long time have not been able to save anything. This excessive taxation has caused a heavy drain on the resources of Nanjinad. This has led to great derivalisation in agricultural persuits and complete economic slavery. While bled-white by taxation and sucked of everything earned by hard labour occurred the terrible drought of theyear 1110 quite unprecedented with the annals of Travancore. The crops over a vast area of lands failed during the Kumbhom crop of 1110 The drought continued and there was no prospect of cultivation in the near future. Government also were convinced of the facts and published a press note restricting the area of cultivation. Lands could not be cultivated for reasons beyond the control of the peasants and deputations and representations were sent to Government. Immediately you assumed charge you were kind enough to grant in remission for the fallow lands during the Kanni crop of 1111 beyond the scope of remission rules. This fortune was dogging our foot-steps. For the Kanni crop of 1113 the havoc was still greater. About 14,000 acres of paddy lands had to be left fallow for scarcity of water and in over 5,000 acres crops completely failed. Sir, you were pleased enough to visit the affected area. His Gracious Highness the Maharaja and Her Highness the Maharani were also pleased to visit the affected areas. Immediately after your arrivals we had heavy showers. We waited upon deputation for remission of tax in respect of the fallow lands and you were pleased to sanction a magnanimous remission of tax and water

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

cess. You were also pleased to sanction a sum of Rs. 25,000 as a first instalment for irrigation works. This kind act will always be cherished by us. This time also the case is similar. It is for reasons beyond the control of ryots that they could not cultivate the lands. If it were possible a single acre of land would not have been left uncultivated. Under these circumstances Government can very well realise the condition obtaining in Nanjinad, as a result of the failure of Kanni crop of 1114. There was absolutely no water as Mr. Fletcher pointed out agriculture is mainly dependent upon irrigation. For reasons beyond our control more than 8,000 acres of lands have been left fallow for the Kanni crop of 1114.

**Mr. M. Govindan :** May I know, Sir, from the honourable member, what suggestion he has to relieve the distress caused by the Kanni crop?

**Mr. V. S. Arumukham Pillai :** Sir, in the course of my speech I will suggest the remedies; now, I am at this point, namely, why the Government are unwilling to grant remission and why we have to agitate for this year after year. The Government seem to think that they are fettered by certain rules. It is probably their idea that the rules regarding Tharisu lands prohibit them from granting remission for fallow lands. Sir, I beg to point out that there is a provision in the Land Revenue Manual which enable Government to grant remission. In volume 2 page 516, a clear direction is given to remit water cess for those lands which cannot be served with Kodayar water. I shall read the relevant portions there. "If any particular land or tract of land cannot be served with Kodayar water in 1085 or in any future years, the cess for such lands for that particular year may be remitted." Now, Sir, this is a clear direction a clear provision, to remit water cess if any particular land or tract within the project area cannot be served with Kodayar water. Here is a case where lands cannot be served with Kodayar water and from what I quote above it is unjustifiable on the part of the Government to realise water cess for these lands. Further, Sir, water cess can be realised only if the Government are able to supply water from any source. Even if water is obtained from any other source the P. W. authorities will say that it is Kodayar water and realise tax. Here, in this case it is clear that neither Government nor any other agency has been able to supply the land with water and, as such, it is most painful, to exact water cess in respect of lands which has to be left fallow. Further land tax is a tax on things and it is presumed to be derived from the income from land and when it is quite clear that these lands are not capable of yielding anything, it is not most cruel to realise tax from these barren lands?

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

[Mr. V. S. Arumukham Pillai.]

Then, coming to the rules again, I may submit that these rules cancelling the immemorial rights of the Nanjinad ryots for fallow remission, were passed on the basis that the Kodayar reservoir will be a complete insurance against drought. Our bitter experience from the year 1110 has amply proved that that hope is entirely unfounded and that the Kodayar reservoir can no longer be depended upon. Therefore, it is up to the Government to change the rules, if necessary, to suit the existing conditions. Sir, it is not before a Court of law that I plead ; if it is so, the court of law can safely say that we are bound by rules and regulations. Here I am pleading before the Government. It is up to Government to change the rules if the Government really think that the rules are inadequate to protect the legitimate interests of the ryots. What I submit is this. If the ryots concerned really deserve sympathy, if they really deserve remission, these rules cannot stand in the way and it is up to the Government to change the rules, I may even go to the extent of saying that any rule which cannot protect of legitimate interests of the ryots is an unsympathetic piece of legislation and must be effaced from the Statute Book.

Further, I have submitted on two prior occasions that Government was graciously pleased to go beyond the scope of the rules. If the rules are really prohibitory of course, in my humble opinion, the rules do not contemplate cases of extreme necessity like the present one it is for the Government to change them.

Further, it is a well-known fact that in cases of vismajor i.e. Act of God, the rules and regulations can be relaxed. There is a strong argument which I would advance for the change of rules and for the grant of remission. Sir, finally, I cannot conclude without appealing to the mercy of the Government. Sir, Nanjinad, which has earned the fair name of the granary of Travancore has served the country and the sovereign and has been most loyal. History will bear ample testimony to the fact that in times of dire necessity our Maharajas have turned towards the loyal subjects of Nanjinad and Nanjinad has nobly responded to the Royal Call. Further, unlike our brethern in North Travancore, we have been contributing a major portion of our income to the coffers of the State. Now that we are living under adverse circumstances and have met with adversity, we come to you for a small thing like the remission of the tax and the Government are bound to protect us and grant this remission. With these words I move this adjournment motion.

**Mr. James Fletcher :** Sir, I second the motion.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

**Mr. M. Ramachandra Rao :** Sir, it is true that the assessment for wet lands in Nanjinad is high. As long as the rains were coming in season, as long as the Kodayar Project did not disappoint them, and as long as the price of paddy was sufficiently high the Nanjinad ryots were continuing happily. During the past few years, nature has disappointed, consequently, the Kodayar Project has also disappointed the people and due to the general depression, the price of paddy has gone down. The Nanjinad ryots have therefore begun to complain and to complain bitterly that the Government is alive to the difficulties of these people, is clear from the fact that from the year 1110, Government have been giving concessions throughout the State and in granting those special concessions Government have shown special consideration to Nanjinad. While the concessions shown elsewhere was 12½ per cent. in Nanjinad, Government gave a concession amounting to 18¾ per cent. Over and above this, Government have granted tharisu ramission as a special case and this has been going on from the year 1111. In 1112, when the Dewan visited Cape Comorin, he received a deputation of the Nanjinad ryots who placed before the Dewan their grievances. They stressed the question of the high tax prevailing in Nanjinad and the difficulty they were labouring under on account of the conversion of the Parah-Marakkal. The Dewan replied to them that the questions will be taken up when the work of re-settlement is taken up. Since then Government have for various reasons decided that the re-settlement work could not be taken up at once. The difficulties of the Nanjinad people had to be considered at once. Government therefore deputed my predecessor in office, Mr. George, to take up the question of conversion of parah into marakkal which is one of the main difficulties of the Nanjinad ryots. Mr. George has gone into the question and has submitted a report and I may say that the Government will issue orders thereon very soon and that I hope the orders will be favourable to the ryots.

**Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai:** Sir, can the communications of officers of Government be divulged ?

**President :** Even officials can express their hope,

**Mr. M. Ramachandra Rao :** Sir, I can assure the House that they can expect a favourable decision very soon.

The tharisu lands question has been taken up separately. I have been getting reports from the taluks and I shall look to that separately. Till then, it is the duty of the ryots to pay the tax. If remission is granted, the excess paid may be adjusted. For example, tax concession was granted in 1113 and in cases where the tax was paid it was adjusted towards the tax for 1114. Regarding water

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

[Mr. M. Ramachandra Rao.]

cess there is some difficulty. The rules require that tax should be paid even if the land gets little water. The rules may require some amendment and I shall look into the question soon. It is true that remission rules as they stand at present are a little stringent. But it is a difficult question to tackle. How long it will take and how far they could be relaxed are questions which are difficult for me to answer now. But I assure the House that these questions will be dealt with soon considering the sympathy which Government have shown till now to the Nanjinad ryots and which is likely to continue to be shown to them, I would request the honourable member to withdraw his motion.

**Mr. V. S. Arumukham Pillai:** Sir, I withdraw the motion.

**President:** The motion, by leave, is withdrawn. The House will now adjourn *sine die*.

The House adjourned *sine die* at 12-40 P. M.

A. GUNAMONY,
*Secretary to the Sri Chitra State Council.*

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly